

I had the privilege of attending the hearing at the University of Washington concerning Broadcast Ownership. I was very happy to see that the two commissioners who took the time to attend were very open to comments, and they listened intently to what was said. It seems quite obvious that the commissioners who chose not to attend have already made up their minds on this issue, and they are not willing to listen to the wishes of the public.

At any rate, I wish to go on record against both deregulation of ownership and the loosening of ownership rules. The 1996 deregulation of the radio markets has been a disaster, and doing so with any other portions of the public airways would only lead to more homogenization. It is already very difficult to find real news in the marketplace, which is in direct conflict with the intent of public airwaves. In order to get my news about the Iraq conflict, for instance, I find myself resorting to internet news agencies which are outside the United States. It should not be this difficult for the public to search out real news when it is the public who owns the airwaves. And the internet is NOT a viable conduit for the free flow of information.

My local papers and local television stations carry nothing but whitewashed soundbites that are carefully chosen and packaged by their networks to manipulate public perception. In contrast to "ascertainment," it has become a matter of the local news agencies dictating and manipulating what the public should consider to be its major concerns. We were told by one of the panel members that the joint ownership of KING and KONG television stations in Seattle allows BELO to provide a more diverse choice for viewers. But all I see is the opportunity to see Dr. Phil twice a day, and nobody should be submitted to that, not even our Taliban prisoners in Cuba.

Thus, I do not subscribe to either of our local newspapers, I do not have cable, and I have not purchased a TV in over 13 years. That is a sad commentary on a nation that calls itself a democracy built upon the freedom of speech. Do not tread on me further by wholesaling this public commons.